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COLOR DISPLAY WITH WHITE LIGHT EMITTING ELEMENTS

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COLOR DISPLAY WITH WHITE LIGHT EMITTING ELEMENTS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to color displays and, more
5 particularly, to color displays that include white light emitting elements.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Light emissive displays provide a very bright and high contrast
image when the ambient illumination from the surroundings is very low. When
10 the ambient illumination is high, for example in sunlight, the contrast of the
display may be much lower because the ambient illumination is reflected from the
display and decreases the contrast of the display.

To some extent, ambient illumination on a display can be
accommodated, for example, by making the display brighter. Techniques for
15 sensing the ambient illumination and making a display brighter are known; see
for example US 6,320,325 by Cok et al., issued November 20, 2001. However,
simply increasing the power to a display is problematic, particularly for OLED
displays whose emissive materials age more rapidly as the display gets brighter.
However, such a design does not accommodate the need for improved efficiency.

20 While power efficiency and contrast are always desirable, they are
particularly desirable in portable applications because an inefficient display limits
the time the device can be used before the power source is recharged. In fact, for
certain applications the rate of power consumption may be more important than
any other display characteristic with the exception of visibility.

25 There is a need, therefore, for an improved display having
improved power efficiency and contrast.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The need is met according to the present invention by providing a
30 color display that includes an array of light emitting pixels, each pixel having a
plurality of color light emitting elements for emitting different colors of light and

at least one additional light emitting element for emitting white light, and wherein the power efficiency of the additional light emitting element is higher than the power efficiency of at least one of the color light emitting elements; means for generating a brightness control signal; and means responsive to the brightness control signal and a color display signal for generating a white display signal for driving the white light emitting element(s).

ADVANTAGES

The advantages of this invention are a color display device with improved power efficiency and contrast.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a schematic diagram showing an arrangement of light emitting elements in a pixel of a display according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a schematic diagram showing an alternative arrangement of light emitting elements in a pixel of a display according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 4a-c are graphs showing relationships between the ambient illumination and display output according to various embodiments of the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a schematic diagram showing a further alternative arrangement of light emitting elements in a pixel of a display according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

Fig. 6 is a schematic diagram showing a still further alternative arrangement of light emitting elements in a pixel of a display according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to Fig. 1, an emissive display device **10** according to the present invention includes a display **12** having an array **14** of pixels **16** composed of color light emitting elements defining a gamut and an additional white light emitting element. As defined herein, white light means any color of light that falls within a gamut defined by the colors of light emitted by the color light emitting elements. The display **12** includes a sensor **18** for sensing ambient illumination incident on the display **12**. The sensor **18** supplies a brightness control signal **20** to a circuit **22** which is responsive to the brightness control signal and a color display signal **26** to generate a white display signal **24** for driving the white light emitting elements in the pixels **16**. The color display signal **26** is employed in a conventional manner for driving the color light emitting elements in the pixels **16**. In a simplified embodiment, the means for generating a brightness control signal (sensor **18**) may be replaced by a manually controlled adjustment such as a knob or slider that the user adjusts to change the brightness of the display.

Referring to Fig. 2, each pixel **16** of the array **14** includes a plurality of color light emitting elements, such as red **30**, green **32**, and blue **34** elements that define a gamut and an additional white light emitting element **36** having a higher efficiency than the color light-emitting elements.

In operation, the display device **10** responds to the color display signals **26** to drive the color light emitting elements **30**, **32**, and **34** to display information, for example, images on the display **12**. The sensor **18** detects the ambient light illumination on the display **12** and creates a brightness control signal **20** connected to a white display signal generating circuit **22**. The white display signal generating circuit **22** creates a white display signal **24** for driving the in-gamut additional white light emitting elements **36**. Thus, as the ambient illumination becomes brighter, the brightness of the display is increased while reducing the saturation of the display. The in-gamut additional white light emitting element **36** is more efficient than at least one of the color light emitting elements **30-34**. Thus, as the ambient illumination increases, the brightness and overall relative efficiency of the display will increase as the light contributed by

the additional light emitting element 36 increases. White light emitters with an efficiency higher than color light emitters are known in the art.

The white display signal generating circuit 22 may be a very simple circuit that converts the brightness control signal 20 to a form suitable for combining with the color display signals. For example, the brightness control signal 20 may be a voltage or current value that is sensed and converted to a digital or analog signal compatible with the display 12. A display controller 28 receives a conventional color image signal 29, such as an R,G,B color signal and provides timing and control signals that are provided to the display 12.

The white display signal W may be formed, for example as follows:

$$W = (R+G+B)/C * F(a), \quad (1)$$

where C is an empirically determined constant and F(a) is a function of the brightness control signal and may simply be a constant times the brightness control signal, or may take a variety of forms as described below. These functions can be implemented by look up tables or operational amplifiers as is known in the art.

This design has the advantage of a very simple implementation. The ambient illumination sensor 18 may be external to the display 12 or it can be integrated on a common substrate with pixels 16. The white display signal generating circuit 22 can also be integrated onto the same substrate. Alternatively, the white display signal generating circuit 22 can be integrated in a separate circuit with display controller 28. The integration of pixel elements, sensor, and circuitry onto a common substrate are all well known capabilities found in the display industry.

There are a variety of relationships that can be devised between the feedback signal 20 and the signal 24 for driving the additional light emitting element 36. A simple monotonic relationship is most suitable but it need not be linear. For example, the signal 24 for driving the additional light emitting element

36 can be very low for all ambient feedback signals corresponding to ambient conditions under 150 cd/m². This provides optimum color saturation in darker conditions. As the ambient illumination increases beyond this point, display brightness becomes a much more significant factor and the display contribution from the additional light-emitting signal can grow much faster to provide a brighter display. Referring to Fig. 4a, a linear relationship between ambient illumination and additional light emitting element brightness is shown. Fig. 4b shows a non-linear function as described above. This concept can be extended to multiple phases as is shown in Fig. 4c where additional contributions from the additional light emitting signal are increased rapidly after staying relatively constant as the ambient illumination incident on the display increases.

A variety of pixel layouts and shapes may be considered and are considered within the scope of the present invention. For example, Fig. 2 illustrates a two-by-two or "quad" arrangement. Alternatively, the light emitting elements 30-36 may be arranged in stripes, as is known in the art and illustrated in Fig. 3. Other light element shapes may also be employed other than rectangular as is shown in Fig. 5. It is also possible for the different light emitting element to have different sizes as is shown in Fig. 6. It is well known that the efficiencies and aging characteristics of the various different colored light emitters are different. This can result in changes in display efficiency and color over time as the display is used. By using different sizes of light emitting elements 30-36, these problems can be overcome to some extent.

It is also important that the white point of the display remain constant as the saturation decreases. This is most readily accomplished by ensuring that the white light emitting element 36 emits light at the same white point as the white point of the display.

According to the present invention, the additional white light emitting elements may provide a greater luminance contribution than either the red or blue elements. It is well known that the green element also provides a greater luminance contribution than either the red or blue elements. Hence, by

positioning the additional element and the green element in a spatially uniform way within a pixel and across the display, image quality is enhanced.

The present invention can be employed in most OLED and back lit LCD device configurations that include four OLEDs per pixel. These include
5 very simple structures comprising a separate anode and cathode per OLED to more sophisticated devices, such as passive matrix displays having orthogonal arrays of anodes and cathodes to form pixels, and active matrix displays where each pixel is controlled independently, for example, with a thin film transistor (TFT). The present invention can be employed in either a top or bottom emitting
10 OLED device of the types known in the prior art.

The different colored light emitting elements may be provided by a uniform white light emitting layer of OLED material to provide an array of white light emitting elements and an array of color filters overlaying the white light emitting elements to provide the colored light emitting elements of the present
15 invention. In this implementation, the efficiency of the additional element will be higher than that of the gamut defining elements if no filter, or a broad spectrum filter is provided over the additional element. Although a single OLED material is used, variations in element use can cause variations in element aging.

Alternatively several different OLED materials that are doped to
20 provide multiple colors may be used to construct the differently colored light emitting elements. For example, the red 30, green 32, blue 34 and white 36 OLEDs may be composed of different OLED materials that are doped to produce different colored OLEDs. In this alternative implementation, OLEDs formed from materials that are doped to produce different colors may have significantly
25 different luminance efficiencies and therefore it may be desirable to select a white OLED with chromaticity coordinates that are biased towards the chromaticity coordinate of the OLED with the lowest power efficiency. By selecting the chromaticity coordinate of the white OLED in this way, the overall power usage may be decreased at the cost of shifting the white point of the display as saturation
30 decreases and the contribution of the white OLED increases.

In the embodiments that have been discussed above, it is important to note that because the additional element is significantly more efficient than at least one of the gamut elements, the current density or power required to drive the additional element is significantly lower than for the at least one gamut element(s). It is also important to note that the luminance stability over time of the materials used to create the light emitting elements is typically related to the current density used to drive the elements through a very non-linear function in which the luminance stability over time of the material is much poorer when driven to higher current densities.

To optimize a display device for various applications, differently sized elements may be used. Studies conducted by the present Inventors have shown that saturated colors are rarely found in either images or graphic applications. Hence the efficiency of a display can be improved by using the additional element in the place of the gamut defining elements. Moreover, the use of the additional element can be so high in typical applications that in order to reduce the current density in the additional element, it is useful to increase the size of the additional element. Typical OLED materials presently in use have a relatively higher efficiency for the additional element and the green element, and a relatively lower efficiency for the red and blue elements. Therefore, an optimized display according to the present invention may have relatively larger red, blue and additional elements, and relatively smaller green elements. For example, in applications for which black and white use dominates, the additional white OLED elements will be used more heavily than any of the gamut defining elements and may therefore be increased in size to reduce the current density and hence aging of the additional element. Text and graphic based applications are typically of this type.

An example of this arrangement described above is shown in Fig. 6, where the green light emitting element 32 is relatively smaller than the additional element 36, and the red and blue elements 30 and 34 are relatively larger than the additional element. The red and blue elements 30 and 34 are largest to compensate for their relatively lower efficiency and the additional

element 36 is larger than the green element 32 to accommodate the larger usage of non-saturated colors in a typical application. The relative size of the additional element with respect to the red and blue elements may be adjusted to compensate for their relative efficiencies and expected use.

- 5 The invention has been described in detail with particular reference to certain preferred embodiments thereof, but it will be understood that variations and modifications can be effected within the spirit and scope of the invention.

PARTS LIST

- 10 display device
- 12 display
- 14 array
- 16 pixel
- 18 sensor
- 20 brightness control signal
- 22 circuit
- 24 white display signal
- 26 color display signal
- 28 display controller
- 29 color image signal
- 30 red light emitting element
- 32 green light emitting element
- 34 blue light emitting element
- 36 white light emitting element